

Mentor – Protégé Program

Purpose

It is the purpose of the City of Asheville and Buncombe County’s Mentor-Protégé Program to provide Minority and Woman Owned Business Enterprise (hereafter referred to as MWBE) firms with assistance and advice. This will increase their ability to successfully compete with businesses in their own specialized areas and increase their capacity to participate in one or more areas of business not traditionally performed by MWBE firms.

This program has been designed to assist firms in their business development by providing “hands on” managerial and technical assistance by those persons experienced in the industry and to develop a broad base of emerging business enterprises that can survive and even thrive in a competitive environment.

Also, a part of this program will increase business development and reveal the needs in our business community that minority firms can help fill.

Action Plan

The Mentor-Protégé program is intended to increase the capacity of businesses owned and controlled by MWBE firms.

The Plan is divided into two (2) stages:

1. Developmental – designed to assist firms in developing their financial and managerial skills.
2. Transitional – follows the development stage and is designed to prepare the firm for leaving the program.

Duration

Limited to one (1) year

Either party, for any reason, may dissolve the agreement by notifying the Minority Business Commission in writing through the Office of Minority Affairs, 28 Valley Street, Asheville, NC 28801.

Program Guidelines

1. Protégé firm must be certified with the City and County at least six (6) months through the Office of Minority Affairs. Additionally, within the six-month period the protégé firm must 1) complete orientation and interview with the Mentor-Protégé committee; 2) submit a completed business plan; and 3) meet one training credit requirement as provided by the Office of Minority Affairs before being accepted into the program. This is to ensure the firm is dedicated to the minority plan process and receiving assistance.
2. Protégé firm must remain certified through the Office of Minority Affairs for the duration of the Mentor-Protégé agreement. If certification lapses more than 30 days, the firm is automatically terminated from the program.
3. An orientation will be provided to selected mentors and protégés, which will review the expectations of the Mentor-Protégé Program and responsibilities. The orientation will be scheduled as needed to initiate participants into the program.
4. Both the mentor and protégé firm must submit a progress report quarterly to the Minority Business Commission for review. This provides communication directly from the firm about their progress and concerns; and, it allows for more assistance if needed.
5. A participant will be recognized as having successfully completed the program when he/she has achieved the objectives and goals set forth in the Mentor-Protégé Program.
6. Mentor and protégé firms who are certified minority businesses with the City and County will not be required to attend annual training through the Office of Minority Affairs as referenced in the Minority Business Plan requirements.
7. Upon entering the Mentor-Protégé Program, the protégé must develop and submit to the Minority Business Commission a development plan for approval. This is to provide for the firm, as well as, the Minority Business Commission, their vision for their business' future and the goals to accomplish it in the short term.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the City of Asheville and Buncombe County's Mentor-Protégé Program is to build a broad base of MWBE firms capable of performing high quality services at competitive prices. The goals of the program are:

1. To increase the volume of work that MWBE firms are awarded in open competition.
2. To broaden the base of their activity by increasing the number of such firms and ensuring their long-term stability.

Measurable Objectives

The measurable objectives of the City of Asheville and Buncombe County's Mentor-Protégé Program are as follows:

1. Increased profitability of protégé firms.
2. Increased sales and revenue of non-traditional contracts awarded to protégé firms.
3. Increased net worth, access to credit and capital by protégé firms.
4. Ability to obtain bonding after participation in the Mentor-Protégé Program.
5. Improved management capacity and capability of the firm.

Means and Methods

To succeed, the Minority Business Commission will solicit the support of the local business community. The Minority Business Commission will network with surety companies, financial institutions, accountants and other professionals who can put minority and woman owned business enterprises on the road to success. The Minority Business Commission will also seek the participation of the major contracting companies in the business community.

The Minority Business Commission's key responsibility is to structure the interaction among the many players, and particularly between mentors and their protégés. The working relationships among the players must be flexible and yet rigid enough to produce results. The Minority Business Commission and the mentors will work together to provide protégés with the necessary resources and assistance to overcome educational and other impediments to their success. A key factor in the program's success is training. The Minority Business Commission and other business service providers should sponsor workshops, seminars and other educational programs for protégés, as strong relationship between mentors and their proteges, as

well as, training and other educational opportunities will help the protégé make the most intelligent business decisions and increase the firm's potential for profitable growth.

Liability Disclaimer

This program is designed to assist minority and women owned firms with the financial, technical and educational training necessary to be successful, profitable and growing businesses. The assistance being provided by the Minority Business Commission, the Office of Minority Affairs and the mentors is merely to encourage, give reasonable advice and information so that the MWBEs can get the assistance needed to expand their firms and themselves. The success of the MWBE firm is not guaranteed but it is hoped that an opportunity is being provided for success.

Any decisions made regarding MWBE firms will be the responsibility of the firm owner. It is the goal of the Mentor-Protégé Program to assist MWBEs in becoming more experienced in managing and planning to allow their firms to compete; and the mentors and other agencies will provide direction, support, encouragement and information that will lead them to that end.

Selection of Program Participants

The selection of mentors and protégés will be accomplished through a committee comprised of representatives from the Minority Business Commission and one (1) representative from the Minority Affairs Office (namely the Coordinator) to meet monthly to review applications, development plans, progress reports, etc. This committee will report to the full Minority Business Commission at its quarterly meetings, conduct orientation sessions to initiate mentors and protégés and prepare a year end report to be included with the annual report of the Office of Minority Affairs on the program progress. In the course of the application process, interviews and other ways that it finds effective, the committee will assure that the candidate understands and accepts the program's expectations and is committed to the success of the program.

SELECTION OF MENTORS

The Minority Business Commission, in conjunction with the Office of Minority Affairs, will recruit and interview all potential mentors. According to the Minority Business Plan, mentors may be non-minority or minority.

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A mentor is defined as a person looked upon for advice, guidance and leadership. The Mentor-Protégé committee will be looking for the following qualifications in mentors:

1. Willingness to share experience to motivate good business practices.
2. Commitment to offering available resources and tools of the trade to increase productivity and quality of work.
3. Commitment to provide encouragement and optimism.
4. Must be willing to provide authority in giving direction to the protégé to meet the goals of the development plan.
5. Commitment to developing an honest professional relationship which will in turn increase the level of business excellence.

SELECTION OF PROTÉGÉS

The Minority Business Commission will invite MWBEs certified by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County for at least six (6) months to enroll in the program. The Mentor-Protégé Committee will interview the firms that apply to identify and/or clarify each firm's needs. The committee shall use the application along with the data contained in the certification file to determine the applicant's status and possible areas of assistance.

A protégé is defined as one whose well being or career is furthered by a mentor. The Mentor-Protégé committee will be looking for the following qualifications in protégés:

1. Must have an enthusiastic desire to be successful and eager to learn allowing for change and flexibility to make effective business decisions.
2. Must be willing to be open and honest with the needs and weaknesses in their business performance.
3. Must be willing to receive direction and guidance for desired results.

APPLICATIONS

Completed applications should be submitted to the Office of Minority Affairs located at 28 Valley Street, Asheville, NC 28801. Upon review of the completed application and attachments, the applicants will be notified of their acceptance within 21 business days.

The mentor, prior to the expiration of the firm's program term, may discontinue participation of an MWBE firm in the program. This may be the result of the MWBE firm's failure to engage in business practices that will promote its competitiveness within a reasonable period of time as evidenced by a pattern of inadequate performance. Also, the mentor can discontinue the participation of a firm that does not actively pursue and bid on contracts, and a firm that, without justification, regularly fails to respond to solicitations in the type of work it is qualified and available to perform. Either party, for any reason, may also dissolve the agreement by notifying the Minority Business Commission through the Office of Minority Affairs in writing.

ASSIGNMENT OF MENTORS TO PROTÉGÉS

In addition to the efforts of the Minority Business Commission and the Office of Minority Affairs to recruit protégés, potential mentors should identify MWBE firms that would benefit from the guidance and training that would be provided by their company. In turn, MWBE firms should identify those individuals or companies they would like to choose as mentors and with whom they would be willing to develop a mentor-protégé relationship.

If an MWBE firm or potential mentor does not have a mentor or protégé, the firm may still submit a completed application and when a firm becomes available to fill the missing role, the applicant will be contacted and the selection procedure will begin.

Once firms have agreed to participate, each party is required to sign and return the ***Agreement of Participation*** to the Minority Business Commission via the Office of Minority Affairs before credit can be given for participation in the program.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTORS

Since the number and quality of the mentors will be key to the success of the program, mentors will come from well-established companies. The mentor should carefully select the staff it assigns to the program by their level of commitment and their ability to truly mentor the protégé. The program personnel should be experienced professionals who are committed to the program objectives and who are assigned to the program for its duration. These persons should have the knowledge and experience to help MWBE firms refine and implement sound development plans.

Mentors are expected to make themselves readily available to their protégés. Their time is the most important contribution to the program. Among other things, mentors must attend all meetings and be dedicated to providing the training and marketing assistance needed.

Between the regularly scheduled meetings, mentors must be available to help their protégés address any significant business problems they may confront. To a degree, the mentor needs to be “on call.” It is important to remember that small businesses are generally simple in structure and are often a reflection of the owner’s personality. They are more concerned with the day-to-day business issues than with long-term planning. These businesses usually do not have the capital to hire additional staff. Instead, the owner will do most of the work. Although it is the purpose of this program to emerge these businesses into planners and visionaries, regular communication is essential to assure that problems can be discussed and resolved until this goal is reached.

The mentor should assist the protégé in preparing the development plan. Protégés are required to present a development plan to the Minority Business Commission via the Office of Minority Affairs within three (3) months of acceptance into the program. The development plan will identify the protégé’s:

1. Business targets (such as potential customers, clients, new markets, etc.)
2. Objectives
3. Goals

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This development plan will contain at least the following:

1. Information on the background and experience of the owners; the number and types of personnel; the amount of capital; and, the number, types and values of equipment.
2. Estimation of the protégé's prospects for profitable operation during the term of the agreement. It should include potential markets.
3. The strengths and weaknesses of the protégé firm with some viable solutions to correct any financial, managerial, technical or labor conditions that could hinder the firm receiving contracts.
4. Specific targets, objectives and goals for the business development of the protégé firm for the next year.
5. Estimates of the contracts to be pursued from the MWBE program and other sources that are needed to meet objectives and goals for the year covered by the agreement.

The writing of a development plan is a major task, however, a necessary one for the success of a business operation. The Minority Business Commission, Office of Minority Affairs and the mentor shall provide assistance to the protégé in developing this plan. Additionally, the following resources may be used by protégés to complete a development plan:

Asheville Business Development Center
70 Woodfin Place, Suite 305
Asheville, NC 28801
Phone 828-252-2516
Fax 828-252-6047
Email ashevillebdc@yahoo.com

Small Business & Technology Dev. Ctr.
P.O. Box 2510
Asheville, NC 28802
Phone 828-251-6025
Fax 828-232-5126
WebPage www.ashevillechamber.org

S.C.O.R.E.
Service Corp of Retired Executives
259 Federal Building
151 Patton Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801
Phone/Fax 828-271-4786
Email ashscore@juno.com

Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
Small Business Enterprise Division
PO Box 1010
Asheville, NC 28802
Phone 828-258-6116
Fax 828-251-0926
WebPage www.sbtcd.org

Mountain Microenterprise Fund
29 ½ Page Ave.
Asheville, NC 28801
Phone 828-253-2834
888-389-3089
Fax 828-255-7953
WebPage <http://www.mtnmicro.org>

In determining whether the protégé firm has achieved its goals, the following shall be taken into consideration:

1. Profitability
2. Sales, including ratio of non-traditional contracts to traditional type of contracts.
3. Net worth, working capital, capitalization, and access to credit and capital.
4. Ability to obtain bonding.
5. Good management capacity and capability.

Upon determination by the Minority Business Commission that the protégé should be graduated from the program, the Minority Business Commission shall notify the mentor in writing of its intent to graduate the firm.

On a regular basis, the mentor should review the protégé's development plan, and as their protégés grow and develop, mentors should keep close tabs on their protégé's key business indicators, including their cash flow, work in progress and recent bids.

Mentors should also teach their protégés how to market their business. Minority and women owned business enterprises often do not have the resources to do the kind of marketing that is usual in large business. Development of bids, networking and effective marketing strategies are often weak areas. Mentors can provide assistance in these areas and greatly enhance the ability of the protégé to gain business. Mentors are expected to assist the protégé in making contacts and establishing relationships necessary for conducting business and increasing revenues.

Mentor's experience can also be expected to help protégés:

- Identify any weaknesses in their general or financial management.
- Identify the professional services that could help address those areas.
- Identify any seminars or other educational programs that protégés should attend.
- Directly impact protégé's management skills.

The mentor's guidance is expected to increase the protégé's capabilities. Increasing the capabilities of MWBE firms will result in those businesses becoming stronger, more competitive, more viable and more capable.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROTÉGÉS

The protégé must have a strong commitment to the program. This is a unique opportunity for the protégé to gain immeasurably toward the future success of their company. The protégé will be required to pledge top level commitment of time and resources to the program.

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The following are some of the major areas in which the protégé can gain.

- General business management
- Financial management
- Personnel management
- Marketing
- Business development and overall business planning
- Any other assistance designed to develop the capabilities of the protégé firm under the developmental program

Protégés are required to attend all regularly scheduled meetings (see pages 10-11) and to complete the agenda for those meetings. Between such meetings, protégés are required to make every reasonable effort to implement the business decisions that the meetings and discussions with their mentors produce.

This includes decisions to:

- Work with an accountant or other professional service provider
- Attend seminars and/or other educational programs
- Implement specific changes in the management or operation of their business

On a continuing basis, and for as long as they are enrolled in the program, protégés must also:

- Provide complete up-to-date information on their businesses, including their development plan, their cash flow, their latest bids and their work in progress
- Take the initiative to request whatever additional assistance they may need to address significant business issues

RESPONSIBILITY OF PROGRAM SPONSOR

The Minority Business Commission will serve as program sponsor. It will be the responsibility of the sponsor to organize and coordinate the program's administration. In addition, the sponsor will be a major source of management and technical support for the protégés. Their other administrative responsibilities will include:

- Advertising and promoting the program
- Organizing related business events
- Identifying potential mentors

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- Identifying potential protégés
- Informing and reminding mentors and protégés of their roles and responsibilities
- Collecting status reports
- Maintaining program records

The Minority Business Commission shall recruit local management, accounting and other professional service organizations to provide support to protégé companies. The sponsor will also play an educational role in sponsoring workshops and seminars relevant to the needs of the emerging MWBE firms and because of the day-to-day decisions and operations are critical to MWBEs, the sponsor will promptly respond to any telephone calls, requests for meetings or other assistance needed.

MEETINGS

Mentors and their protégés should meet at least once a month, at a regularly scheduled time and place. The protégé will arrange these meetings and prepare a written agenda for each. The protégé will take notes on the meeting and no later than the end of the following business day, distribute a written report on the meeting to all the participants, including the Minority Business Commission via the Office of Minority Affairs.

The report will outline the protégé's most recent efforts to implement the development plan and the results of those efforts. The report will list the protégé's current needs. Mentors and protégés should use this report to guide their next steps.

At the regular monthly meetings, mentors and their protégés will review the items on the protégé's development plan and make any appropriate changes in course of action. Any major changes in the development plan must have the approval of the Mentor-Protégé committee. The monthly development plan review will include:

- Reviewing and identifying any new barriers to the protégé's success
- Identifying any management, accounting or other professional services that the protégé still needs
- Setting specific targets for further improvements
- Setting a deadline for each target

In the development plans themselves, mentors and protégés should record the steps necessary and results required for the protégés improving their prospects for success.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress reports are intended to help everyone assess the actual results of the Mentor-Protégé Program. They should also help the various players clarify and strengthen their individual roles. Recognizing that the relationships among the players are all voluntary; the reports will also help strengthen the program as a whole.

Quarterly, the Minority Business Commission (via the Mentor-Protégé Committee) will produce a progress report on each protégé based on the performance standards that the ordinance recommends. These reports will be forwarded to the protégés, their mentors and the Office of Minority Affairs. Protégés and Mentors will produce progress reports to be provided to the Minority Business Commission (Mentor-Protégé Committee) via the Office of Minority Affairs. This will provide to the Mentor-Protégé Committee the viewpoint of each participant to evaluate throughout the program duration.

OTHER REPORTS

The protégé must prepare an annual report on the mentor-protégé relationship and submit to the Minority Business Commission via the Office of Minority Affairs. The annual report shall contain a comparison with each category in the development plan, a summary of work accomplishment and how the mentor assisted.